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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Washington, D.C. 20520

FAEM

EXCISE

April 17, 1981

Dear Mr. Fish:

I am writing in response to your inquiry of April 7, regarding [redacted] request for information about the Israeli attack upon the Navy communications vessel U.S.S. Liberty on June 8, 1967.

Immediately upon learning of the attack on the Liberty, the Department of State made clear to the Government of Israel that the U.S. held Israel responsible for the incident. The Government of Israel offered an immediate apology, accepted complete responsibility and offered to pay compensation for the deaths and injuries caused by the attack.

Allegations have been periodically made that Israel deliberately attacked the Liberty. The Department has no information that would corroborate these allegations. In 1967, a U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry made a full investigation of the attack upon the Liberty. Officers and men of the Liberty testified at this inquiry, and message traffic to and from the ship was reviewed thoroughly. The transcript of the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry has been available to the public for several years. The Court reached the conclusion that it did not have sufficient information to make a judgment about the reasons for the Israeli action against the Liberty.

Former Senator Stevenson corresponded from time to time with the Department about the Liberty case but we have no knowledge of any Congressional hearings having been held by him. The U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry investigation record is now a public document and should be a available from the Navy Department. It is doubtful that a new investigation at this time would resolve the different allegations and theories about the incident, many of which involve assumptions that would be difficult to prove or disprove conclusively.

The Honorable
Hamilton Fish, Jr.,
House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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Israel paid in full in 1968 and 1969 the U.S. Government claims for $3,323,500 on behalf of the men who were killed and $3,452,275 on behalf of the injured members of the Liberty crew. Although there can never be adequate compensation for wrongful death or injury, the families and individuals involved received the full amount of these claims.

The United States also submitted to the Government of Israel a claim for compensation for the physical damage to the ship. Following a series of contacts through diplomatic channels, the U.S. on December 17, 1980 accepted Israel's offer to pay $6,000,000 as final settlement of this claim. Under the terms of the agreement, Israel is to pay the $6,000,000 in three annual installments of $2,000,000 each. The first installment was paid on January 15, 1981.

I hope this information is useful.

Sincerely,

Alvin Paul Drischler
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.

Drafted:NEA/IAI:ECubbison:mgk
Cleared: NEA/IAI:DAKorn
NEA:MDraper
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4/17/81 .0046-0105

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